

BUSH FELLOWSHIP CRITERIA AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Thank you for your interest in the 2026 Bush Fellowship Program. To help with the application process, we provide this copy of the criteria and online application questions to help you prepare your responses.

The 2026 application opens on Tuesday, September 2, 2025, and closes on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, at noon Central.

If you have questions, please contact us at staff@bushfoundation.org.

SELECTION CRITERIA

YOUR IMPACT AS A LEADER.

Track record: You make the most of opportunities and consistently find ways to have more impact. You don't let obstacles get in the way because you are an experienced problem solver, able to get results. You bring a wide range of perspectives to help inform and make decisions.

Outstanding character: You are a leader that is admired and respected within your community. You demonstrate integrity and generosity of spirit. You value and demonstrate inclusive and equitable leadership.

Always learning: You operate with curiosity. You actively seek new experiences and knowledge to increase your effectiveness. You value multiple perspectives and welcome feedback that challenges your point of view to build broader understanding.

YOUR VISION FOR CHANGE.

Big ideas for big change: You dream big about what's possible. You have a vision to create equitable, large-scale change in your community. You are committed to working to benefit people and communities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the geography.

Your role in creating change: You demonstrate the vision and drive to be extraordinary in your leadership. You have a clear understanding of how you will be uniquely positioned to lead your vision for change.

YOUR PLAN FOR THE FELLOWSHIP.

Trajectory changing: You clearly identify your leadership goals. You know what experiences you need that will change the trajectory of your leadership and are ready to invest the time and energy it will take to achieve this goal.

How you will use your Fellowship: Your plan for the Fellowship pushes your leadership growth in ways that would not be possible without the Fellowship. You think big! You know what you need to have even more impact as a leader. You clearly explain how your plan will help you lead in more equitable and sustainable ways.

APPLICANT REGISTRATION

This information will be used to create a new application. Even if you have completed an application for the Bush Fellowship in the past, you will need to create a new application each year of applying.

Please note, some options in this document will be formatted differently than what appears in the online application (e.g., drop-down boxes versus a bulleted list of choices).

- Salutation (picklist)
- First name
- Middle name
- Last name
- Your name is part of your identity, and we hope to address you with the accurate pronunciation. If you would like, please share how to pronounce your name. For example, you could spell it phonetically or provide an example, like “rhymes with”
 - If you would like, please share your gender pronouns. (open text field)
- Email type (personal, office, alternate)
- Email address
- Phone type (office, home, mobile)
- Phone
- Home street
- Home city
- Home state (picklist)
- Home zip code

APPLICATION INFORMATION

The following information helps us to understand who you are **and are not used for the purposes of selection.**

- What is your date of birth?
- Please share your gender identity. (open text field)
- Which racial/ethnic groups do you identify with? Select all that apply.
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian/Asian American
- Black/African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- Some other race
- White
- I prefer not to answer
- If you selected Black/African American or Asian/Asian American in the question above, please also select the following options, if applicable.
- African Immigrant/Refugee
- Southeast Asian
- If you are currently enrolled in a tribe(s), please select which tribe(s) from the list below.
- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa

- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe
- Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe
- Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Grand Portage Band of Chippewa
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
- Lower Sioux Indian Community
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- Oglala Sioux Tribe
- Prairie Island Indian Community
- Red Lake Chippewa Indians
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribe
- Spirit Lake Nation
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
- Three Affiliated Tribes
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa
- Upper Sioux Community
- White Earth Band of Ojibwe
- Yankton Sioux Tribe
- Other
- Select the option that best describes your current area of work.
- Academic
- Business
- Nonprofit
- Public
- How did you hear about the Fellowship?
- Bush Fellow
- Email
- Flyer
- Referral
- Website/Internet search
- Other

If referred by a Bush Fellow, Bush Foundation staff or a member in our community, please list their name and email address below. We ask for this information so we can thank people who refer applicants and make sure they have up-to-date information about the program.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

We recommend viewing the application questions and selection criteria as a whole to see how they connect to one another.

1: Tell us about who you are and key aspects of your leadership within your community.

We want to understand your journey to leadership, your work and experiences over time that have helped shape who you are as a leader today.

Max: 1,500 characters or roughly 300 words OR use the provided platform to record a short video or audio response (max: 2 minutes). Select just one option. You cannot do both.

2: Tell us about your track record as a leader and how you have used your influence to create change. Be clear about your specific role in making change happen.

We want to understand the change you've helped to create through your leadership over time, including how you have brought people together to work on solutions to problems in your community and how you have used obstacles as an opportunity for growth.

Max: 1,500 characters or roughly 300 words

3: Tell us about your vision for the large-scale equitable change you want to help make happen—and why that change is needed in your community.

We want to understand your vision for transformational change—your big ideas and how you remain open to new ways of seeing problems and solutions.

Max: 2,500 characters or roughly 500 words

4: Tell us how your leadership can bring your vision to life, including why you are uniquely positioned to lead this change

We want to understand your connection with your community and how your experiences and perspectives will help bring about the change you envision.

Max: 2,000 characters or roughly 400 words

5: Tell us about your overall leadership goals (think 5, 10 or 15 years ahead) and what you need to be a more effective leader in order to accomplish your vision.

We want to understand how you are thinking about your goals to grow as a leader. What do you need for you to become a stronger leader with increased impact?

Max: 2,000 characters or roughly 400 words

6: Tell us about the specific skills, experiences and connections you need to grow your capacity to lead and how it will change the trajectory of your leadership?

We want to understand more about how you will use your Fellowship to accomplish key leadership development goals through this transformational experience—goals that would not be possible without a Fellowship. This should be clearly defined and include what you will do, why you want to do it and how you will do it. We do not need a calendar of activities.

Max: 2,500 characters or roughly 500 words

REFERENCES

Please provide the names of two references and how they're connected to you. If you are selected as a semifinalist, the references you provide will be asked to participate in a 30-minute phone call with a Bush Foundation representative to discuss your leadership.

Both references should be people who can speak to your leadership ability and/or potential. The two references should include:

- One person who has led you (e.g., work or volunteer supervisor, mentor, board chair)
- One person you have led

Both references should be people who can speak to your leadership ability and/or potential. At least one reference should be a person who lives in the region. Please do not include immediate family members.

It is more important that you choose people who know you well and can speak to your leadership skills and/or potential rather than a well-known person in the community who does not know you as well.

A Bush Foundation representative will only contact references for applicants selected as semifinalists.

Reference #1

- Reference 1 name
- Reference 1 email
- Reference 1 phone number
- Reference 1 connection to you

Reference #2

- Reference 2 name
- Reference 2 email
- Reference 2 phone number
- Reference 2 connection to you

LEGAL HISTORY

Having a criminal history does not automatically disqualify you from receiving a Bush Fellowship.

- List any federal, state or municipal law violation convictions. Exclude traffic violations or any violations which occurred prior to your 18th birthday. If none exist, enter N/A. *Max: 1,100 characters, roughly 180 words*
- List any legal judgments, bankruptcy proceedings, lawsuits or legal claims pending or docketed against you. Exclude claims for less than \$100. If none exist, enter N/A. *Max: 1,100 characters, roughly 180 words*

RESUME

Please submit your current resume. A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is not needed.